

THE RELATION OF NEWSPAPERS TO LITERATURE.

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THE RELATION OF NEWSPAPERS TO LITERATURE.

A learned lord justice once, in the course of a case he was trying, termed journalism "literature in a hurry". As to the hurry, there can be no doubt, but many disagree on the literature phase. The present study, therefore, is an attempt to investigate the influence of journalism on literature. That is, do the newspapers and periodicals of to-day make our American people superficial readers? Is their style of writing destroying or revolutionizing real literature? Are the two incompatible? What is the relation between the two?

Many magazine articles have been written recently on the subject of newspapers, various aspects receiving attention. Every possible charge has been brought against the press from sensationalism to commercial dishonesty. However true these charges may be, at any rate, it is an undeniable fact that newspapers have a great influence on our life in general. To sketch briefly the rise of the newspapers will give us a better idea of its present value.

Journalism undoubtedly had its beginning in Rome, where the Acta Divina, on tablets or manuscripts, reported the general news, such as fires, executions, storms, and other happenings. The first newspaper in the United States was published at Boston in 1690 by Benjamin Harris. It was called "Public Occurrences", and lived only one day, as the government suppressed it. Nearly fourteen years later, "The Boston News-letter" was issued. This was the only

paper printed in Boston during the siege. From 1690 to 1775, many papers were started but were discontinued, usually for political reasons. During the period of the Revolution and the days of unsettled government that followed, many stirring papers were published, notably the "Massachusetts Spy". The first daily newspaper in the U. S. was "The N. Y. Journal and Register" in 1788.

A period of immense expansion in journalism began about 1830, on the establishment of the great N. Y. Dailies. Before the Battle of Bull Run, Sunday papers were frowned at by all citizens of the country. But with a million men in arms, parents and wives could not wait for the news till Monday morning.

The present wide range of the Newspaper can be somewhat estimated by the report in Ayer and Sons' Newspaper Annual and Directory for 1919 that, excluding all college publications and so-called transient sheets, there were 2,486 daily newspapers in the U. S. Of these, 1,831 were evening editions, and 655 morning editions. Newspapers are regularly published in 11,650 towns and cities.

The reading of newspapers has, in fact, become a habit all over the civilized world. Almost every man in the most modestly assured position begins his day with the perusal of the morning paper. Most of our knowledge of public life, our information about foreign affairs, domestic politics, new books, drama, finance, and social scandal is drawn from the Press. It is the medium of exchange by which the nation shares its information, its ideas, its feeling. It is a constant companion and generally, a perpetual irritant to the

mind. We accept the daily paper as a matter of course, just as we accept trains, telegrams, and restaurants as a matter of course. Our stock of current information is largely derived from it. Well or ill conducted, the modern press collectively considered is the outward manifestation and index of the ruling forces and influences in our nation. The aspect of the newspaper question here dealt with, however, is distinctly limited to its relation to, and influence on, literature.

In order to get a definite and up-to-the-minute expression on the subject, upwards of thirty letters were written to prominent educators, newspaper men, authors, and other authorities on the matter. In the majority of cases, the letters were answered, the replies showing careful thought in the preparation of subject matter. They were interesting also because of the diversity of opinion expressed. Books written on the subject were few and hard to find, but every available article, pamphlet, and periodical which set forth any view on the matter has been studied and the ideas expressed, from the editor of the "Spectator" down, have been noted.

In the beginning, it is well to note that the difference between journalism and literature is not an essential difference in subject matter. A kidnapped child, a fashionable wedding, or the mysterious murder of a woman, may afford material either for journalism or for literary art. The material will be interesting to the newspaper writer as news. The same material will be interesting to the fiction writer as it bears upon some universal principle or emotion of human

life. In fact, some reporters develop extra-journalistic skill in portraying character. Kipling is a good modern example of the reporting journalist turning story writer. His subject matter was much the same in both fields. So, little distinction can be made between a piece of journalism and a piece of formal literature on the ground of subject matter alone. If we turn from subject matter to form, however, we find a greater distinction as we will see if we now hastily review the customary form of newspaper stories.

The method of telling the news story is usually the opposite of that employed by the writer of fiction. Instead of giving the setting of his story and then working gradually toward the climax, the news writer, as a rule, puts the climax in the very beginning--in what is technically called 'the lead' of the story. The lead gives the reader in clear, concise, yet interesting, form the gist of the whole story, emphasizing or "playing up" the "feature" of it that is most attractive. The lead may consist merely of a single sentence, or it may consist of several short paragraphs. Into the first paragraph, as the place of greatest importance, is put the most important part of the news. The least important details go to the latter part of the story so that unless the reader is particularly interested, he need not follow through the account to the end; and so that, if necessary, parts may be cut off entirely without causing any loss that will be evident. The fitting together into columns of stories of different lengths after they are in type often requires that the last paragraph or paragraphs be cut off. This

possibility adds to the importance of putting the least significant elements into the latter part of the story and of concentrating the essentials at the beginning. Kipling once said that every good reporter had six servants to aid in the work. These six servants are the answers to the questions, who, what, when, why, where, and how. The lead generally carries these six answers, although a few well-edited newspapers, such as the Kansas City "Star" and "Times" now tell the story chronologically from the start, often leaving out the lead or introduction altogether. This is probably the result of the growing importance of the headline in the modern newspaper. In most news stories, however, the beginning rather than the end is the most emphatic position.

The diverse opinions expressed concerning the real differences between journalism and literature will be brought out as we proceed to the main question of the relationship between the two.

Influence on our Language.

In discussing the influence of journalism on English as a whole, it is often said that the degradation of our language is to a great extent due to the ascendancy of the daily newspaper. In the haste of production, its many niceties of speech are neglected. Descriptive reporters are probably responsible for much of our slipshod writing. For instance, one reporter in describing a fire scene, said: "Between six and seven fire engines rushed up to the scene simultaneously". In covering an inquest, a reporter wrote that the "post-mortem examination showed that the unfortunate girl was a teacher's daughter". Many of the amusing mistakes

seen in our papers may be perhaps laid to compositors and proof-readers.

J. E. le Montmorency, writing in the London "Contemporary Review", says that the press is having a serious influence on the English tongue.

"The press tends to give a permanent value to words and phrases and even ungrammatical constructions that are part of the stock-in-trade of professions or trades or players of the world. Many thousands of jargons are straining the mother language in every direction, and the Press is making the strain a permanent force, when it should be an evanescent trouble."

Quoting further, he asks:

"Does the press in its leading and special articles and by means of its enormous organization, exercise the deliberate influence for the literary good of the language that the English-speaking race has the right to expect? In the case of certain editors and certain very well known journalists, there can be no doubt that a deliberate effort is being made to prevent the fouling of the well which is now taking place. But this is not true of the press generally speaking, and it is not true of the press of an organized institution. The reckless use of adjectives in leading articles, in descriptive articles as well as in the newspaper bills is a disgrace to a literary people. The abuse of the adjective by the entire Press, the absence of responsibility as to the meaning of words, the looseness of construction in sentences, the entire neglect of English as a means of conveying exact ideas are a disgrace to our press."

Charles G. Ross, assistant professor of journalism in the University of Missouri, does not agree with Mr. le Montmorency. He writes:

"'Newspaper English' has often been used as a term of reproach, as if the newspapers, by concerted action, had been guilty of creating an inferior, trademarked brand of English for their own purposes. The term has been hurled indiscriminately at all newspapers, the good as well as the bad, and young writers have been warned in a vague, general way to beware of the reporter's

style. As applied to loosely edited newspapers the criticism is just. It is not true, however, that 'newspaper English' constitutes a special variety of language, to be shunned by all who would attain purity in writing. There are good books and bad books, just as there are good newspapers and bad newspapers, and it would be as unreasonable to condemn all books because they are written in a 'bookish' style as it is to include all news-writing in a sweeping condemnation.

"No defense is needed of the style of writing in the well-edited modern newspaper. Free from pedantry and obsolete expressions, the English of the best newspapers fulfills its purpose of telling the news of the day in language that all can understand. Newspaper English has not been created by the newspapers alone. It is the language of the people, clarified and simplified in the writing, as opposed to the language of an earlier day which obscured the writer's thought in a maze of high-sounding words. Newspaper English, at its best, is nothing more or less than good English employed in the setting forth of news. At its worst, it embodies the common faults of writing."

Along this same line of thought, the "Washington Herald" writes:

"Newspaper English is the standard. There may be critics, who belong to a past generation and who have learned by rule, but for flexible, expressive use of the language the newspaper and the other publications for the masses cannot be surpassed. . . . When scientific or technical terms are employed, there is sufficient context to make clear the application. There is no strained or laborious use of words to-day. Nor is there a deterioration, as some of the professors of English would have us believe. Newspaper style is simple, direct, concise, instructive, and self-explanatory. This sets the standard for the great mass of the public."

John Livingston Lowes of Washington University has gathered together a large group of headlines which shows^t the example the newspaper gives to the reading public in the misuse of grammar.

He writes:

"Whether the headlines of one's morning paper are a matter for laughter or tears, is largely a

question of the reader's temperament. As in the case of Atticus, there is often ground for both, especially on the part of those who are interested in the potent influences at work upon our speech. It is striking for its brevity, conciseness, and tellingness of phrase,--but in this, the headline often plays fantastic tricks before high heaven."

A few of the examples he gives, the originals of which are in his possession follow:

"To Pen for Killing Over One Cent",--he found was an account of a sentence to the penitentiary imposed upon one Wesneski for the killing of a pal in a dispute over the possession of one cent.

"Ex-Banker's Head is Dead" was an unusually artistic one.

In his study of headlines, he found that they greatly enrich our vocabulary. It has long been a matter of course that all legislators should be "solons", all aldermen, "city fathers", etc. But now he read: "Biscuit Baron Finds South Outstrips North in Progress." The biscuit baron turned out to be the millionaire president of a biscuit company.

Another amazing one he collected was "Angry at being Shot, Shootee beats Shooter".

Headlines are magnificently Elizabethan in the freedom with which any part of speech is made to do duty for any other. Examples are: "Held, Due to River Death"; "Mr.-- to Travel-Talk", and "To Honeymoon in South America". Yet headlines are more widely read than anything else in the newspaper. In fact, as Upton Sinclair says: "We can no

more resist sensational headlines printed in a newspaper than a donkey can resist a field of fat clover."

Influence on Literary Values.

Modern newspapers have blunted our appreciation of literary values, even though they have made reading almost universal, according to Prof. Richard Green Moulton, the distinguished critic, editor, and professor at the University of Chicago. He admits that journalism has enormously increased the number of readers, but at the same time he holds that it has undermined, and is undermining the power to read. He describes the particular effect of this as "the dissipation of attention". Newspapers and magazines are not for reading in the sense in which we use that word of books.

He says:

"The use of newspapers develops a special mental habit,--a power of sweeping swiftly over vast areas of print, with attention held in leash ready to be ~~skipped~~ upon a few widely scattered things of interest. The mental habit once formed is turned upon other kinds of literature. But the reading of books requires sustained and concentrated attention. The great literary classics depend almost as much upon what the reader brings as upon what the author has provided. The story telling of antiquity is potent by what it leaves out. He who would tell a story to the most modern reader will need to see that every effect he desires is put in, unmistakably in, or it will be lost. I think those who have had experience in the literary training of the present generation will recognize this blunting of the instinct of appreciation where there is ample intelligence for appreciating what is pointed out. Thus there never was a time when the intensive study of literature was more needed than at present. The reader who is anxious to be up-to-date is apt to find the reviews more alive than the formal literature. What is really happening is that unconsciously this habit is filching from him his power of recognizing literary vitality

when he sees it."

Prof. Moulton also deplores the fact that the characteristic of periodical literature tends to become anonymity, (surely a distinguishing mark from book literature), for with it comes the almost total loss of responsibility.

"For a great part of a newspaper, no individual can be responsible. To what some newspapers print, no decent man would put his name. Thus by the rise of journalism, a place is found in literature for what is morally outrageous. More serious still is the removal of every barrier against looseness of statement and unverified information. Worst of all, is the consideration that by periodical literature, a pecuniary premium is put upon unreliability and insinuation. It is the sensational headline that sells the extra; the spicy rumor that gives the modern journal its vogue".

Notwithstanding the above statements, Prof. Moulton answers the question of, Should journalism be looked upon as literature? with, "Journalism is the universalization of literature."

The original oral poetry was addressed to the public as a whole. The passage from oral to written literature limits literature to a reading class, with a correspondent narrowing of interest. With periodical literature, the appeal and breadth of interest are again made universal and the universalization of literature by journalism is not potential, but actual. Of course, the theory has been that if the advent of books was a limitation of literary interest to a reading class, this was a temporary thing to be overcome by education. But when we turn from theory to practice, we find that education has signally failed to bring about what is

required. It develops the faculty, but does not stimulate the motive and interest. Public schools can easily make reading universal in the sense of giving the faculty to read, but have they given the motives for reading or impulses toward literature? Moulton's answer is: "Where education has failed, journalism has succeeded. The newspaper has made literature a universal interest."

Collins, disagreeing with Moulton, does not believe that newspapers are making the American people superficial.

"Many newspapers print a great deal of superficial matter intended to appeal to the superficial-minded. Those who are not superficial-minded will seek information elsewhere, either in other newspapers or from sources apart from newspapers. Wherever you find a community with enough serious-minded people to warrant it, you are pretty apt to find a newspaper that treats the subject of news, seriously. I think that on the whole the newspapers, by furnishing an opportunity to write to great numbers of people, have developed a great many of the writers who now make what we call our formal literature. No great writer ever became great except through long practice. The newspapers furnish the opportunity to practice."

So the old dilemma comes up again as to which comes first, demand or supply, the newspaper or the people's demand for the newspaper. Along this same line, Charles B. Welch, editor and manager of the "Tacoma News-Tribune" writes:

"Your query 'Are newspapers making the American people superficial readers?' seems to me to be almost as unanswerable as the riddle: 'Which came first, the hen or the egg?' It depends on what is cause and effect. Personally, I have always held the superficiality of our reading to-day created the particular style of newspapers which we have to-day. There are a few newspapers left in America which are not superficial, notably 'The Boston Transcript' and

"The New York Evening Post". The "Transcript" has a circulation of 50,000 in a city where one of its competitors enjoys a circulation of 500,000. And "The Post" has 35,000 readers while "The New York Journal" has 750,000. Turn to the magazine field. "The Atlantic Monthly" struggles along with a weak 100,000 while the lurid "Cosmopolitan" boasts of a circulation of two million and over. We are living, unfortunately enough, in a jazz age and the newspaper that does not prove entertaining and lively loses circulation and goes out of business.

"Perhaps the element of time enters into this superficiality, as we call it. News was once a matter of reflection and deliberateness. Nowadays a revolution breaks out in Italy and five or six hours afterwards, the news is on the streets of Tacoma and every Washington city. Necessarily, the collection, editing, dispatching, and publishing of this news must be accomplished in a very short space of time. This necessity for speed in handling works against thoughtful and deliberate analysis. It is the penalty we pay for doing things in a hurry. As to newspaper style, may I call your attention to the fact that many of the present day authors, whose style is admitted to be excellent, have been newspaper men and women. Most of the editors of our magazines have served on the journals of the metropolitan press. One reason why newspaper style is not as good as might be, may be gathered from this letter. During its composition, there have been six personal interruptions, ten telephone calls, and three messages which required my presence in other parts of the building. The marvel is that newspapers have as much style as they have. . . ."

"The New York Sun" and "Evening Herald" writes:

"In our opinion, the newspaper press of the United States, far from encouraging superficiality in the reader, is actually promoting correct and logical thinking and arousing the healthy curiosity which leads men and women to undertake serious research concerning the subjects which are brought to their attention. Much admirable writing is done for American newspapers and many masters of fine literary styles have obtained their training on American newspapers. Real literature and newspaper writing are by no means incompatible."

The opinion of Irvin S. Cobb, our combined author and journalist, coincides with the above. Writing from

Robert Hodge, he says, is right:

"Generally speaking, our newspapers are well-written--much better written, probably, than in any previous period of our national life. The common style of newspaper writing neither is destroying nor revolutionizing real literature, but is constantly helping it. As a matter of fact, a great deal of what I would call real literature appears daily in the news columns of daily newspapers. The two are not incompatible, being related and inter-related."

Verne Hardin Porter, editor of the "Cosmopolitan" is even more emphatic.

"Our newspapers are the greatest influence for true Americanism, and as for their making us superficial, they are doing the opposite. Their influence upon our literature is enormous, and for good. They are helping us to create a truly American literature. Journalism and literature are not incompatible, as witness the fact that most of our greatest writers have come from newspaper offices.

"There are two classes of readers: those who like what they like, and those who like what they think--or have been told--they ought to like. Our only standard of literary value must be the good that a certain work does. And there's no doubting that America gives most to the world in real helpfulness."

"The Los Angeles Examiner" resents the idea of anyone's not classing newspapers as real literature.

"Newspapers constitute one and a very important and educative kind of literature," G. B. West, the editor writes. "What artistic, ethical, or constructive effect it may have upon other classes of literature is a question, the answer to which would depend largely upon individual points of view. Newspaper literature is the only literature a great many people read. Could any other kind replace it? Without newspaper literature, public information as to all of the movements of our day would be unknown to the majority of people. Hence, the general influence of newspapers is very great and useful. We do not know that they affect the character or quality of poetry nor of fiction. But with neither of these literary branches has it anything specifically to do."

George Whitehead, the English novelist, is a strong believer in the idea that the art of literature has no greater aid than daily journalism.

"Some foolish people have said that daily journalism is killing literature in its highest forms," he said. "I say, to the contrary, that the daily paper provides a sort of first course in literature, and I am an immense admirer of the clear, incisive style adopted by the half-penny press.

"It stimulates curiosity, and when once you have done that in any human being you have started him on the right road. The one deadly thing is apathy. The cow in the field has no note of interrogation. The savage might see an aeroplane and not wonder.

"You can lead a man from the curbstone to the stars when you have once made him curious. A newspaper forces a man to be curious. And the truth is so beautiful, so amazingly interesting, so much more wonderful than fiction."

According to Robert Wilson Neal, head of the English and Journalism departments of Massachusetts Agricultural College and a member of the editorial department of "World's Work", all principles of thought-building and of literary form, structure, method, and style are fundamentally involved in journalistic writings. He says:

"Besides presenting and interpreting the news, most newspapers now contain a great deal of writing that is intended to interest, inform, and amuse us in about the same way that a book would interest, inform, or amuse us."

Prof. Georgia Reneau, head of the English and Journalism departments of the College of Puget Sound, gives us her point of view in the following:

"To some extent, I do believe that journalism is making superficial readers. It is possible to

clean a fair knowledge of the news by reading headlines and leads. So a reader forms the habit of expecting much information from the expenditure of little energy. This causes him to become impatient of books, which give their information in much more leisurely, scholarly style. The very multiplicity of newspapers and magazines makes him feel hurried. To-day's paper must be read to-day; this month's magazine must be read this week. The book will wait. But to-morrow, next week, next year, it will be the same.

"Newspaper style is inferior to good literary style as found in more permanent writings. Magazine style is often equal to the best style found in books. Certainly journalistic writing is going to have much influence on literature. Some of that influence is good, some bad. The days of the seven-volume novel, even of the two volume novel are past, thanks to journalistic methods among various influences. That is a good thing. But too much of the hurry, hurry spirit of the newspaper office has crept into the making of books and as a consequence, there is a tendency to lower the standard of English, to throw on the market undigested thought."

"It does not seem to me the two fields are really incompatible if the schools will do their part in upholding the standards of literature and in teaching people to appreciate good literature.

"Books imply a reading class. Journalism makes reading universal. Perhaps, after all, it is better to have everybody reading something than to have only a comparatively few reading the best."

Dr. W. H. Carruth, head of the department of English Literature in Leland Stanford Junior University, writes that he would need a volume to express all his views on the relation of journalism to literature. He says that the influence of most daily papers is bad for literature; of many weeklies and monthlies, good. He heartily believes that the press of America needs reform, but from the point of view of life in general more than of literature.

Walter Williams, professor of History and Principles of Journalism in the University of Missouri, says:

"When a journalist merely records, he is a clerk and book-keeper for the facts of life. When he interprets, whether as contributor, writer, or editor, then journalism is near at hand to literature, if it is not literature. In its highest sense, journalism is not trade nor business, but profession, the profession of the interpreter."

Neither newspapers nor the method of their writing has any effect or anything whatever to do with real literature, according to Booth Tarkington, creator of the beloved "Penrod." Writing from his home in Seavood, Maine, he stated emphatically:

"Newspapers are not making the American people superficial readers. It is not the fault of the newspapers. I do not think that the newspapers or the method of their writing has any effect or has anything at all to do with real literature."

Yet can we agree with Tarkington? For there are six forms of literature, and all are absorbed into journalism, though each undergoes a modification such as the floating character of the medium demands. The Epic passes into journalism in the form of a serial story, for even the most ambitious novels and stories can adapt themselves to periodical literature in successive installments. And right here might be inserted a thought expressed by the head reference librarian of the Tacoma library who said, in a personal interview the writer has with her, that newspapers influence to a great extent many people's selection of books.

"Whenever a newspaper starts printing a serial story which has come out before in book form, we are besieged with inquiries for the book that the story may be finished even before the installments in the paper. The sorry part of the matter is that the stories most often chosen for the papers are not the highest type of literature. But the call for

the book comes just the same."

The lyric is still adapted itself to journalism through the poet's career, or in the Edgar Guest column. Now daily papers appear without some semblance of verse.

As for drama, it might seem that it would be impossible for this to become periodic. But this has been realized in our cartoons, which are dramatic situations of public life presented to the eye. Dialog often accompanies the cartoons, but if not, they are like the puppet play, a drama without words.

History enters journalism with the special correspondent as was especially well shown during the Great War. Just let an interesting happening take place or threaten to take place, and a correspondent is on the spot. The only difference is that the correspondent may not wait for events to attain completeness. He gives us history in the process of making.

Philosophy in the newspaper is found in the editorials. The sixth form, oratory, finds its expression in the letters to the editor.

Authors express the difference between newspaper and book literature in diverse ways. Edgar Sisson, editor of "McClure's Magazine", states his views in the following:

"Literature is a thing of moods, valuable in in thought, working from the inside of the mind to make expression. News is the record of external action--a bulletin board. The spheres are different. Neither should harm the other, but each should aid the other. News has little thought of motive; literature is largely the account of motive. The better a newspaper is written, of course, the better it does its

and the best writing has the appearance of
simplicity, however hard it may be achieved."
Speed of writing makes the newspaper, he gives as
the reason for so many superficial readers, newspapers
miss the relation of fact.

"They are built to be read in the fast moving
part of the day--the morning and the afternoon.
Magazines and books are read in the more
leisurely moments of life. They are built for that.
Newspaper writers may, however, have a great effect
on literature. Many writers come to the newspaper
first, and they have a certain technical knowledge. A
news story is told as much as possible in the first
paragraph. The reader of the novel (or the reviewer
of a play) desires suspense."

Possibly no editor is more familiar with journalism
in rural districts than William Allen White, editor of
the "Emporia Gazette" at Emporia, Kansas, and he pays the
following beautiful tribute to the country paper:

"Our papers, our little country papers, seem
drab and miserably provincial to strangers; yet we
who read them read in their lines the sweet intimate
story of life. It is the country newspaper, bringing
together daily the threads of the town's life,
weaving them into something rich and strange, and
setting the pattern as it weaves, directing the
loom, and giving the cloth its color by mixing the
lives of all the people in its color pot,--it is this
country newspaper that reveals us to ourselves, that
keeps our country hearts quick, our country minds
open, and our country faith strong."

Does this sound like our country newspaper is a "mere
record of external action--a bulletin board"?

The tastes of the American people have not been
corrupted so much by the newspapers as by the magazines,
according to Ellery Sedgewick, editor of "The Atlantic
Monthly." He believes that on the whole they are decidedly
superior to the magazines.

"By no means is journalism incompatible with
literature, for one can point to many instances of
classical attainment in journalism from "The Spectator"
(18)

down."

According to Ida Tarbell, distinguished writer, speaker, and reformer, there is a danger that newspapers may make superficial readers, but she thinks it is the newspapers that are making the American people superficial.

"As a matter of fact, there never were so many serious books read in our country or so large a proportion of the people as there are in the United States to-day. I believe library figures show this.

A percent of these serious book readers probably found their way to the library through the newspapers, so that the interest in ideas and knowledge that the newspaper awakens in some probably offsets the harm that it does to others by making them merely newspaper readers.

"As to the effect of newspaper writing on real literature, there is a question of great interest. The average newspaper writing has its qualities as well as its defects. It may be slovenly in style; it is often indifferent to the rules of grammar; but it almost invariably is interesting. It must be if the newspaper is to be read. It has a quality of liveness, of reality, without which you cannot have real literature. That is I am inclined to think that news-writing, though it has quite obvious dangers for good writing, also contributes something to good writing. Moreover, you take some of our best newspapers, and you find much of the best writing of the country in them. Take "The Oregonian" for example, its editorials, many of them are in admirable English, and they have a foundation of knowledge and a sense of construction. It is not a question of agreeing with the point of view, but they are often worth reading because of the writing.

"We must remember that the newspaper in the nature of the case can be never more than a hasty report of the life of a community, of a state or country for a single day of the week. Things are put down as they strike the writer at the moment. They do not pretend to be literature. They have the same relation to the considered article or a book that a finished address has to extemporaneous speaking and informal discussion. The more knowledge, the more taste, the more sense of construction that the journalist and editor of the newspapers have, the more nearly will what they write take on a literary quality. The reader should discriminate and intelligent readers do. If the reader allows himself to be submerged in the newspaper and only that, it is his fault, not the

newspaper's touch."

Just as we have already decided that the newspaper is essentially a true piece of literature, we read a scathing article, "Journalism--The Destroyer of Literature", in the critic. The author is Julian Hawthorne, the editor of the staff of one of the most widely read papers in the world, indeed startles us with the statement: "What lives in literature, dies in journalism."

He says:

"Literature is nature and life passed through a human mind and tinged with his mood and personality. It is warmed by his emotions, and modified by his limitations. It is a product not simple, but complex; not crudely put together, but digested, assimilated, made part of the writer, given his stamp, signature, and history. Not till then does it appear on the page.

"In all this, what is there congenial with bright, hard, impersonal, business-like, matter-of-fact journalism? Of course, it is physically possible to print in a newspaper, Keats' "Ode to a Nightingale." It is also physically possible for us to affirm, 'The newspaper is a 'literary medium' as well as a news-purveyor? Yes, we may go through the motions of harnessing Pegasus to a market-garden cart, and call the result a team. But Pegasus will not stay harnessed. He doesn't belong on the market-garden plane, and wasn't really there when we were fastening the traces. Keats' "Nightingale" cannot be made to sing cheek by jowl with a soap advertisement, in the gas-light glare of 'Miss Make-up's Advice to the Lovelorn'. Violently to bring these things together is not to unite them, though it is profanation, and the fate of the profaner is to lose his power of ever seeing the sunlit summits of Delectable Mountains at all.

"No, what lives in literature, dies in journalism,--the individual touch, the deeps of feeling, the second sight."

And Hawthorne believes that the newspapers have tainted our magazines and weeklies as well, explaining that the original magazine was what its name implies--a place for

the storing of literary treasure. The newspaper now is the characteristic voice of the age, and, as the age cannot have two characteristic voices, the success of the newspaper has compelled the magazines to modify their contents, so as to meet the timely rivalry. Now, therefore, magazines try to handle "timely" subjects, to treat topics of the day, to discuss "burning issues".

He believes this is impossible to real literary spirit, and though important uses may be served, they are not literary uses. Even our stories, he affirms, are thus infected. The class of stories which are the most acceptable has to do with current domestic and social problems, with dramas and intrigues of business.

"The interest is sustained, the detail is vividly realistic, the characters are such as you meet everywhere, the whole handling is alert, smart, telling, up-to-date,--but where are the personal touch, atmosphere, the consecration, the dream? What has literature to do with these clever stories? Everybody can write nowadays, but literary geniuses are as rare as ever, and never before had such a difficulty in getting a hearing."

Langdon Warner, rebelling against the article, answered Hawthorne in a later issue of "The Critic":

"Is it not within the bounds of possibility that even our everyday news should be so well and so clearly set forth that the value of its literary matter could be easily judged? We do not expect the millennium yet but it is only the most obvious and every-day sort of practicality to set before oneself a high ideal.

"What we need then is to re-wed literature with journalism, for surely God hath joined them together and it was man who put them asunder. Let young men, fresh from our colleges, do this thing. We want eager, scornful men, with high-carried standards, and deliberately chosen aims. Honor and sentiment and humor are as much in place in our daily press as in daily life,

and are less found there."

We liked this spirited rebellion, and later, felt a glow of satisfaction when St. Loe Stratchey, who has been editor of "The Spectator" for so many years, answered the question: Are journalism and literature incompatible? with "I do not believe they are." He says:

"After all, in the last resort, literature is a matter of **style** and expression. Literature rejects nothing as beneath it. Nothing is too small or too humble for its notice, provided there is dignity and appropriateness of treatment, and that the right word is put in the right place.

"Journalism may become literature if those who practice it take trouble enough about their style. But style in a large measure is a question of plainness of speech. And by plainness, I mean not baldness or dullness, but clearness and intelligibility,--the bringing home to the mind, the making plain and clear, whatever meaning the writer wishes to convey. I want to dwell on plainness of speech in this sense, because I believe that if the journalist can attain to it, he will be able to reconcile journalism and literature. All men who write, and especially those who belong to my trade, and write daily, lose a very great deal of their power to fix the attention of those to whose minds they appeal by failing to reach a sufficient plainness of speech. Our failure is due to the fact that it takes a great deal more time and trouble to write simply and clearly than it does to use what Mark Twain called 'dictionary words' and abstract ideas. Men sometimes say they dislike a short, splintery, staccato style, and would not use it if they could, but I suspect that at bottom, the dislike of short sentences is to be found in the fact that they are harder to write. The true secret of a clear, unaffected style is to have clear, strong thoughts. The real difficulty in writing is in the thinking. If once a man has thought out his theme, and has realized his ideas, all difficulties of expression soon vanish. Men write badly because they are too lazy or too busy. It is not because journalism and literature are incompatible."

In studying our question, we might adopt the cynical attitude of Oscar Wilde, who said:

"There is much to be said in favor of modern journalism. By giving us the opinion of the uneducated, it keeps us in touch with the ignorance of the community. By carefully chronicling the current events"

of contemporary life, it shows us of what very little importance such events really are. By invariably discussing the unnecessary, it makes us understand what things are requisite for real culture and literature and what are not."

We remember, however, the long list of recognized writers now contributing to the press, and can scarcely agree with Wilde.

The foregoing study has not been comprehensive enough to make possible a final statement of the relation of journalism to literature. The subject is such a big one that until we had interviewed every known authority on the subject, we could not make a final statement. We can, with truth, say that from the opinions expressed, the majority of writers believe that the newspapers are not making the American people superficial readers, although some emphatically state that they are. Still others believe there is a danger of their doing so.

The literature of the newspaper reporter has less chance of permanency than the literature of the publisher's venture. Yet ~~it~~ serves its purpose and makes itself felt more than is generally suspected. It may easily happen that a brief sketch of some apparently trivial scene or incident printed in an obscure paper actually excels in pure literary quality a more elaborate structure of fiction given all the dignity of publication between covers of its own.

Great as the mutual influence has been, we still have our "lead" in the newspaper story, with all the details and uninteresting explanations following, and we also have

our traditional book form with the "happy ever after" last chapter, up to which our interest and suspense are kept. We like both styles; each fits each. To the writer, they do not seem incompatible, but each helping the other, should supplement the other. For just as formal literature links together men of one age with men of another, so journalism links together men of the same age. Granting that newspapers tend to be superficial, yet the consensus of opinion seems to be that, notwithstanding that fact, newspapers are, and should be, a necessary step in real literature leading up to the more formal type.